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KEEPING IN *Focus* WITH PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of Personnel Washington 25, D. C.

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NUMBER 1

MEMORANDUM

To: Agency Heads
Deputy Administrators For Management
Personnel Officers

From: Director of Personnel

I am anxious to gear our total personnel policies and practices to effectively facilitate operating programs in this Department. In my view, personnel management functions and the people who carry them out have no other reason to exist. I hope you agree with me.

I expect this Office to give the kind of positive personnel management leadership that you in the Agencies have a right to expect. To accomplish this, we need "wide open" channels of communication (both ways) between you in the Agencies and this Office.

There are many ways to accomplish this. I think one thing we need to start in this direction is an "on the beam" personnel tips sheet. This is the first edition. I hope you find it useful. I hope you will contribute to future editions.

After a fair trial period, I want your candid evaluation. If you think it helps you, we will continue getting it out. If not, we will either change it or stop it.

Let me have your ideas on the kind of items you feel this Office and yours should get into this life-line of communications to the Agencies and between the Agencies. I'll appreciate your help.

Carl B. Barnes

SUPERGRADE DEVELOPMENTS

Legislation proposed by the administration which is now pending in the Senate and House Civil Service Committess would increase the number of Federal supergrade positions. There would be an increase of 400 in GS-18, 17 and 16 positions subject to assignment by the Civil Service Commission.

The Department is reviewing its supergrades to determine those positions which would represent the most urgent needs from a priority standpoint. On completion of this review, the Office of Personnel will contact the agencies to develop position description statements and justification materials. We will then request the Commission to evaluate such positions for proposed allocation at supergrade levels.

TOP LEVEL PERSONNEL ACTIONS can be expedited if:

They are properly prepared and ready to go.

All essential documents are accurate, complete, properly authenticated and dated.

The letter or statement of justification anticipates and meets every applicable test by:

Identification of the appropriate acceptable qualification and/or classification standard.

Describing how such standards are met.

Including valid criteria for measuring intangible relationships - and assigning appropriate weight, specifically, when recommending the use of such alternate standards.

Certification that the candidates background has been fully evaluated and it has been determined that his fitness for high public office has been established.

Including a statement as to whether full field investigation has or will be requested and/or reference to the location of any pertinent investigative file.

KEEPING USDA "IMAGE" IN FOCUS AT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Building and maintaining a favorable "image" of exciting and challenging work in USDA with college faculty members and students is basic to positive, effective college recruitment. The Office of Personnel sought for USDA and was granted (free) space for a 3,500 word illustrated article in the October 1961 issue of the Journal of College Placement. This publication goes to all college and university faculties in the United States. ARS accepted the challenge on this one. More will follow.

"RIFLE TARGET" APPROACH TO RECRUITMENT

USDA Agencies are focusing on "rifle target" approach in college recruitment. This requires Agencies to project for 1961-62 fiscal year definite employment needs in all categories and pinpoint shortage areas. Recruitment efforts should be aimed at specific shortage areas, both present and projected.

EMPLOYEE MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

On July 18, 1961, the Administrative Assistant Secretary issued a memorandum to Heads of Department Agencies incorporating the text of a memorandum from President Kennedy regarding Employee-Management Relations in the Federal Service. Personnel policies and procedures should provide for employee-management relations that include views of employee groups. Be sure to keep alert on this one.

RELOCATION COST SURVEY

Questionnaires on relocation costs incurred by transferees (random sample) to Washington, D. C. positions are being completed for the Civil Service Commission. These are to be used as support data for a legislative proposal to ease the financial burden of employees and to thus provide greater mobility. These questionnaires are being completed by employees at GS-9 and above who have dependents.

TIPS From: U.S. Department of Agriculture Health Officer

"BIG DADDY"

Let. Buchanan 700

Yes, you are! If you are a supervisor, an administrator, or a personnel officer, you are a "Big Daddy." Your employees feel you are "Daddy" to inspire them, lead them, limit them, protect them, in essence, love them. I know, how corny can you get? But it's true. Joe or Mary don't know or care who all the "wheels" are, just who is "My Boss." My boss is my job, is the Department, is the Federal Government.

The parallel with your family is all too familiar. As with your children, they will test you, demand of you, bank on you, want to tell their troubles to you, expect you to know their every need. They will be disappointed, miss work, slough off, react to your every move and mood as children do if you fail them. So, whether you like it or not, you are stuck with it. I know, you say, "I can't be all this, I am no expert, I am not a cop, a doctor, a lawyer, a mindreader!" But, you are expected to be if you are a supervisor worth his salt.

A supervisor should be a supervisor, a boss first. A scientist, a programmer, a statistician, yes, but a supervisor first. Okay, "Doc," you say, what the hell are you cramming the act for! I'll tell you why. If supervisors would take supervision seriously I wouldn't be called in to order fitness for duty examinations, to help on too early retirement cases, to smell out alcoholism and check on absenteeism.

What do I ask? Get to know your people. What kind of backgrounds, what kind of needs, what kind of dreams and hopes do they have? How do they see themselves and others? What kind of a guy am I? Would I like me as a boss? Would I respect and work for me?

If you know them well you will know when and why they are disappointed, afraid, unhappy and angry. You will know when things aren't right at home, or at work. You will call him or her in and listen. You will not interrupt, advise, ridicule, tell him to stop thinking or doing what he does when he can't, tell your troubles, etc., etc.

You will listen very carefully and every few minutes summarize to him what you hear. This alone will solve many problems. Why? First he will feel that somebody is really listening and secondly, when he hears his story back it may appear quite differently, or a solution may well suggest itself. Then, when you have heard them out, decide if anything further is in order. Is a solution within your ability to offer? Often it will be.

What are the signals that you should listen for, that can mean trouble, that should be referred for professional help? You are not only your brother's keeper but are negligent if you don't. These signals are an exaggeration of their usual behavior; a radical change in behavior, or signs of anxiousness (sweating, restlessness, unable to get started or finish a job, unable to concentrate, and depression, apathy, self-criticism, tearfulness.) Continuous excitement and overactivity or consistently avoiding others are also warnings that may mean serious trouble. Now, remember, we all have these symptoms now and then, but when they persist for several weeks then it may be serious.

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"BIG DADDY" - Cont'd.

Every boss ought to have arrangements to refer employees to sources of help in his community. Get to know a psychiatrist in your community or the people in your hospital, or your clinics so that when you need help you know which way to turn.

You know what to do in case of fire or theft, why not illness, which I understand a boss dreads more than any other problem. Is it your responsibility? Yes, it is! You expect your child's teacher, scout master, camp director, to take the initiative - remember you are "Big Daddy." Often an employee's behavior is just a disguised way of asking for help and he will be ever grateful though he may act, for a while, angry or hurt.

If you don't think you can handle it and he won't follow your recommendations then go to Personnel and get help. Don't do "nothing." Don't wait for "Unsatisfactory Performance," or until group morale is gone, or until conditions or others force you to act. Don't be afraid of criticism. You're not worth your salt if everyone all the time thinks well of you. Be a boss and be proud of it. Demand respect of your employees but don't demand they love you. You have to love them. You get your love somewhere but not from your employees.

Okay if they call you by the first name but look out if they spell it with small letters. Big Daddies have big hearts, broad shoulders, good ears, small mouths and clear heads - are you one? Get a yearly physical and psychological examination. Good supervisors in industry do.

Suggested reading:

Human Understanding in Industry
Wm. C. Menninger, M.D.
Harry Levinson, PHD
SRA Publications for Business and
Industry

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION INSPECTION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, 1961-62

The Civil Service Commission is renewing their cycle of inspection of the Department. In Washington, they will start with the smaller centrally operating agencies which they will inspect much as in former years. The larger agencies with field administrative offices - AMS, ARS, ASCS, FHA, FCIC, FS, SCS - will come under their nation-wide inspection plans for the first time.

Under the nation-wide procedure a sampling of each agency's field operations has been agreed to by the Civil Service Commission, the Department and the agency concerned. The actual scheduling of the field inspections has been left to the Civil Service Commission's regional offices with instructions to complete FHA, SCS AND FCIC by December 31, 1961 and the other four agencies by June 30, 1962. The reports of field establishments inspected will be incorporated with the report of the inspection of the agency's national office into a separate nation-wide report for each agency. When all the inspections are completed, a nation-wide analysis of the Department's total programs will be included in a report to the Secretary of Agriculture.

MOBILIZATION REGULATIONS

In a short while, a set of standby personnel regulations will be issued. These regulations are designed for use only in the event of a National emergency.

To cope with a National emergency, they provide broader delegations of authority and waive or simplify many requirements currently in effect.

Delegated employment and classification officers should read these standby regulations carefully. When and if a National emergency is declared, only a terse "GO" notice from OP will place them in effect immediately.